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UNCLAS KATHMANDU 001219

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR SA/INS, PRM/RMACKLER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREF PREL CH NP

SUBJECT: NEPAL RELEASES NINETEEN TIBETANS TO UNHCR

REF: KATHMANDU 1214

¶1. (SBU) IN A UNHCR BRIEFING TO THE DONOR COMMUNITY IN KATHMANDU ON JUNE 30, EMBASSY WAS INFORMED THAT THE 19 TIBETANS ARRESTED ON JUNE 24 (REFTEL) HAVE BEEN TURNED OVER TO THE UNHCR FOR PROCESSING AND TRANSIT TO INDIA.

¶2. (SBU) ON JUNE 29, A UNHCR TEAM ARRIVED IN KAILALI DISTRICT IN WESTERN NEPAL, IMMEDIATELY ENGAGED IN DISCUSSIONS WITH LOCAL IMMIGRATION AND POLICE OFFICIALS AND SECURED THE RELEASE OF THE 19 TIBETAN TRAVELERS. THE UNHCR TEAM THEN ARRANGED FOR A BUS TO TRANSPORT THE TIBETANS, DEPARTING ON JUNE 30 FOR THE 674-KILOMETER TRIP TO KATHMANDU. UNHCR EXPECTS THE BUS TO ARRIVE AT THE UNHCR RECEPTION CENTER ON JULY 1.

¶3. (SBU) COMMENT. POST BELIEVES THE RELEASE OF THE 19 TIBETANS TO UNHCR IS CONFIRMATION OF PRIME MINISTER THAPA'S ASSURANCES THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF NEPAL HAS NOT CHANGED ITS POLICY TOWARD TIBETAN REFUGEES. THAT SAID, POST WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR CLOSELY THE GON'S TREATMENT OF TIBETAN REFUGEES. END COMMENT.

MALINOWSKI